

Current federal law does not require companies to list ingredients in household products used every day on floors, counters, sinks, in yards and all around the home



Plainview, NY – On Monday, Rep Steve Israel (D-Long Island), the Citizens Campaign for the Environment, and the Huntington Breast Cancer Action Coalition announced new legislation to protect consumers. The Household Product Labeling Act of 2009 (H.R. 3057) was introduced by Rep. Israel.

“We require ingredient labeling for the food we put in our mouths, but not for soap in which we wash our plates. The lack of labeling required for household products is ludicrous, it’s dangerous, and it’s due for a change,” said Rep. Steve Israel. “We have buckets and bottles full of this stuff, but no clue what’s in it. We have a right to know. The legislation I just introduced will require companies to list all ingredients for these products right on the package. This is a bill about protecting consumers, protecting our children, and keeping our homes safe.”

“Harmful chemicals are hidden within everyday household cleaning products that can cause health effects such as asthma, skin irritations, respiratory ailments and damage to the reproductive system and the nervous system. For years, companies have gotten away with putting dangerous chemicals in products by taking advantage of the lack of consumer awareness,” said Adrienne Esposito, Executive Director of Citizens Campaign for the Environment. “Families across America deserve to know if harmful chemicals are contained in products sold in grocery stores so that they can make informed, healthy choices for themselves and their families.”

“Consumers are entitled to, and should expect, full and accurate labeling on any and all products they purchase. This is the first step toward minimizing the use of toxic chemicals we’re exposed to every day,” said Karen Joy Miller, Director of the Huntington Breast Cancer

Action Coalition.

Current federal law does not require companies to list ingredients for household products including cleaning agents, pesticides, epoxy, paint and stains. Rep. Israel's legislation will require that companies provide a complete and accurate list of all ingredients on the product container or product packaging.

Many cleaning products contain chemicals that have been proven to be dangerous to human health. A list of examples from "Household Hazards," a report by Women's Voices for the Earth (2007) includes:

- Monoethanolamine (MEA) is a surfactant found in some laundry detergents, all-purpose cleaners and floor cleaners and is a known inducer of occupational asthma.
- Ammonium quaternary compounds are disinfectants found in some disinfectant sprays and toilet cleaners that have been identified as inducers of occupational asthma.
- Glycol ethers, such as 2-butoxyethanol, are solvents commonly found in glass cleaners and all-purpose spray cleaners that have been linked to reduced fertility and low birth weight in exposed mice.
- Alkylphenol ethoxylates (APEs) are surfactants found in laundry detergents, stain removers, and all-purpose cleaners, which have been found to reduce embryo survival in fish, and alter tadpole development. APEs are commonly detected as contaminants in rivers and streams – including in the Long Island Sound, and have also been found in household dust.
- Phthalates are carriers for fragrance in glass cleaners, deodorizers, laundry detergents and fabric softeners, which have been linked to adverse effects on male children, reduced sperm count in adult men, and increased allergic symptoms and asthma in children.

According to a recent study by the Center for the New American Dream, the institutional cleaning industry uses an estimated five billion pounds of chemicals annually in the United States. Children are at an increased risk for being affected by these products, as are women who make up a disproportionate amount of housekeepers and cleaning service staff.

Rep. Israel serves on the House Appropriations Committee.